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ABSTRACT

The characteristics and components of a competency-based teacher education program within which the skills for teaching reading and language arts are developed and implemented are identified in this paper. A four-phase systemic curriculum model developed at the University of North Florida is presented. Twenty-five enabling objectives were written for the specialized competencies component related to reading and language arts and are discussed in the report. Included among these are the following: demonstrate command of key concepts in the field of language arts and reading, demonstrate ability to gain access to recorded knowledge in the field of language arts and reading, identify strategies appropriate for teaching reading and language arts, analyze current reading and language arts curriculum materials, develop a model of your own for teaching reading and language arts, identify appropriate support systems for reading and language arts, know and understand the steps in system analysis as they relate to reading and language arts, and know and understand the basic steps in system evaluation as they apply to reading and language arts. A list of broad general competencies used as part of the four-phase development model are also presented and discussed. (WR)

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Teacher Education: Reading and Language Arts
Royal Room Braniff Place
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The Systemic Approach to Competency Based Teacher Education

A Change Implied:

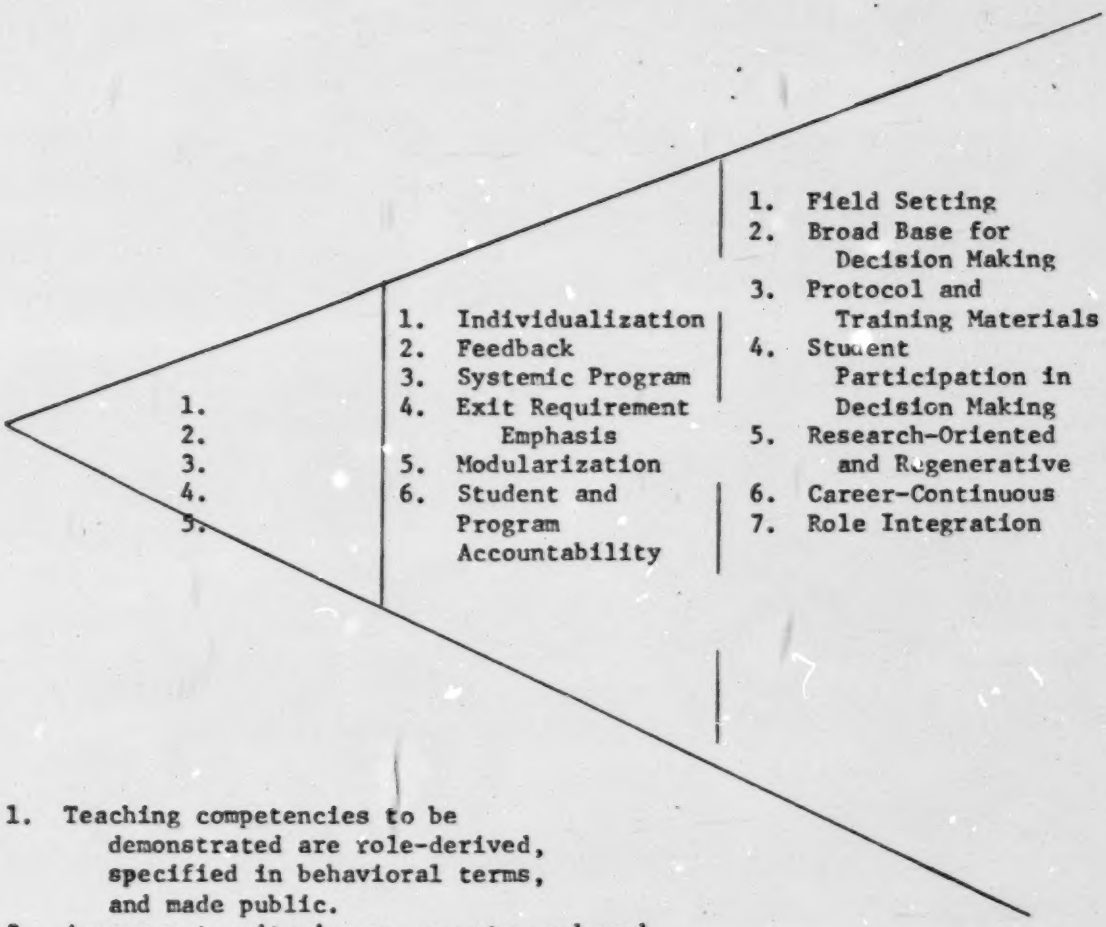
Make it relevant, effective, and efficient. Move from teacher centered, mass education to group oriented individualized instruction. Show us not only what you know but also what you can do. Demonstrate your adequacy for the tasks you have been assigned. Be accountable!

Those familiar with the competency or performance-based teacher education movement will recall these exhortations with crystal clarity. What may not be recalled so accurately is how the essential, implied and related characteristics of this movement are defined.

A Change Defined:

Houston and Howsam caution that by its very nature the definition of competency-based teacher education will be complex and will continue, over a period of time, to emerge from its several characteristics (1). Elam reports that a committee of A.A.C.T.E. has reviewed several of these characteristics and agreed upon five which they consider essential, six which are implied and seven which are related and desirable characteristics of performance-based teacher education (2).

Conceptual Model of Performance - Based Teacher Education



1. Teaching competencies to be demonstrated are role-derived, specified in behavioral terms, and made public.
2. Assessment criteria are competency-based, specify mastery levels, and made public.
3. Assessment requires performance as prime evidence, takes student knowledge into account.
4. Student's progress rate depends on demonstrated competency.
5. Instructional program facilitates development and evaluation of specific competencies.

How to Change:

If the definition of competency-based teacher education is complex and slow to emerge, the process by which a fully functioning program is brought into existence is even more elusive and difficult to attain. Ultimately the commitment an institution makes is but a reflection of the goals it holds important to achieve.

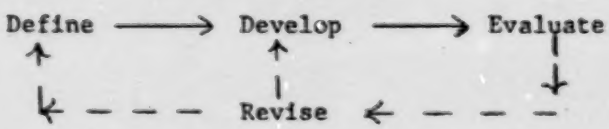
Houston describes two strategies by which to embrace and one by which to avoid the change to competency-based teacher education. (3) To avoid change a parallel program strategy may be used wherein the errant child is allowed to pursue his will at a safe distance from the main stream. Given enough time, he will tire of his solitude and fall in step with those old and wise in the ways of stability and tradition. To encompass change, an expanding pilot group approach may be encouraged to gradually enlarge until it has become the entire program. The change may also be accomplished by developing a total program in one move.

The approach being used by the department of elementary and secondary education at the University of North Florida comes closest to the last of the three just described. As a part of a newly opening university the department was in a position to build rather than revise its curriculum along CBTE

lines. From its inception it was envisioned that this program would not only exhibit the five essential elements of competency-based teacher education but also aspire to embrace many of the implied and related and desirable characteristics described by Elam. Among those considered most basic and essential to program development was the systemic approach.

The Systemic Approach:

In its most basic form the systemic approach is defined by Houston as a four stage design in which one defines, develops, evaluates, and revises his product or process in a never-ending, self-regenerating-process of renewal. (4) He recommends this as



a most promising way to deal simultaneously with all the elements of a CBTE program.

The U. N. F. program:

A four phase development model was used at the University of North Florida to give impetus and direction to its program development. In phase I and II goals and objectives were cooperatively specified, analyzed, and confirmed by a group of

one hundred classroom teachers, public school administrators, State Department officials and U.N.F. faculty who were asked to project what they thought schools would be like and what activities teachers would be engaged in over the next ten years. The six terminal performance objectives that evolved from the work of this body were spelled out in the following terms. The product of the instructional system must be able to (1) select and organize content, (2) plan for instruction, (3) idenfity and demonstrate strategies, (4) collect and use assessment data, (5) demonstrate leadership and professionalism, and (6) demonstrate conceptual skills relative to systems analysis.

Two levels of analysis sorted these terminal performance objectives into four basic program components. (A component is defined as a cluster of related objectives which complement each other and form the basis for a block of related studies.) The components are: (1) Career decisions and program planning, (2) broad general competencies, (3) specialized competencies, and (4) professional leadership and change agent competencies. For these four components a total of ninety-one enabling objectives were delineated in competency terms. In order to better communicate with tradition-oriented University and State Department administrators components were matched to time-honored course titles. Component enabling objectives or

competencies were then translated into performance statements by faculty task forces using Houston format modules (5) as their primary vehicle for instruction.

Reading and Language Arts Task Force:

Of immediate interest to the reading and language arts task force were the twenty five enabling objectives written for the specialized competencies component. They are included here in a form modified for ease in relating them to reading and language arts and shortened to meet the constraints of the length limitations of this paper.

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the sub-areas of knowledge and the general classification scheme for ordering that knowledge in the field of language arts and reading.
2. Demonstrate command of key concepts in the field of language arts and reading.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the language arts and reading.
4. Demonstrate ability to gain access to recorded knowledge in the field of language arts and reading.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of interdisciplinary relationships relative to language arts and reading.

6. Demonstrate knowledge of relevant materials in the field of language arts and reading.
7. Demonstrate understanding of basic principles of selection and organization of content in the field of language arts and reading.
8. Analyze current reading and language arts curriculum materials.
9. Select and organize reading and language arts content.
10. Analyze audio and/or video tapes of ones own teaching of language arts and reading lessons.
11. Modify teaching performance in light of these analyses.
12. Identify strategies appropriate for teaching reading and language arts.
13. Execute each strategy
14. Evaluate each strategy
15. Identify appropriate support systems for reading and language arts.
16. Use appropriate support systems while demonstrating strategies for teaching reading and language arts.
17. Evaluate results
18. Develop a model of your own for teaching reading and language arts.

19. Plan lessons using your model
20. Develop instructional materials and identify support systems for implementation of reading and language arts lessons.
21. Execute your lesson
22. Evaluate the results
23. Know and understand the steps in system analysis as they relate to reading and language arts.
24. Know and understand basic steps in system design as they relate to reading and language arts.
25. Know and understand the basic steps in system evaluation as they apply to reading and language arts.

All but the last three of these enabling objectives were translated into performance statements and packaged in several language arts and four reading modules. While attempting to provide self-contained learning packets and yet remain within the limits of its assigned enabling objectives it became clear to the task force that it was expected to assume that students had already mastered certain generic competencies prior to encountering the reading-language arts modules.

Generic Competencies:

Houston points out that at some point in CBTE development certain aspects of the several parts of the program will be recognized as common or "generic" teaching competencies. It will then be clear that these objectives will form a core upon which special methods and student teaching will build (6). At the University of North Florida a list of broad-general competencies were spelled out from the very beginning as a part of its four phase development model. Illustrative of these are the shortened and simplified examples listed below.

1. Identify and write behavioral objectives in the three domains.
2. Identify, explain, plan for, use, and evaluate basic teacing-learning strategies.
3. Know and apply basic concepts and principles relative to construction, use and evaluation of a wide variety of means by which learning growth and other aspects of child development can be measured.
4. Know one or more teaching analysis systems.

Assigned to other faculty task forces these objectives were translated into module clusters that for communications purposes were labeled core courses. Students who mastered the core course competencies possessed the prerequisite skills upon

which language, reading and other skills competencies were to be built. And it came to pass that it was agreed in theory that this would be a wise and efficient use of both student and faculty time. Much needless repetition would be avoided and a common standard in generic areas could be established for all. However, in practice it was found, on the one hand, that professors had forgotten or perhaps had really never understood that they were not to teach the student all that he would ever learn about teaching in one "course" and, on the other hand, that students who took "courses" out of sequence were in some ways ill-prepared to work in the skills competences areas. Obviously a cog in the system had slipped out of its groove somewhere and a problem existed. Houston and Howsam put the situation in a new light when they remined the would be builders that the strength of a competency based program lies in its emphasis on total program and the ability of faculty to see the gestalt of program pieces. (7).

In its second year of operation it has become clear that the University of North Florida must transcend its expedient course orientation and move toward conceptualization of a program. To do this it has placed renewed emphasis on the basic elements of its original systemic design. Broad-based involvement and decision making is assured through the

continuous operation of six subsystems and a planning board as faculty teams encounter the continuing process of development, testing, and refining program elements advocated by Houston as the ultimate in regenerative design. (8)

Immersed in that process is the language arts-reading task force still searching for the keys to the multi-faceted, interlocking network of generic and special competencies with which it is working. It is a team that finds itself far from where it would ultimately like to be but nevertheless moving, via the systems approach, toward a practical competency based program for training teachers of reading and language arts.

1. Houston, Robert W. and Robert B. Howsam, Competency-Based Teacher Education. Palo Alto: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1972, pp 3-4.

2. Elam, Stanley, Performance-Based Teacher Education, What is the State of the Art? Washington: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1971, p. 8.

3. Houston, Robert W., Performance Education, Strategies and Resources for Developing a Competency-Based Teacher Education Program. Washington: U.S. Office of Education, pp. 85-87.

4. Ibid., p. 58

5. Ibid., p. 73

6. Ibid., pp. 31-33.

7. Houston and Howsam, op. cit., p. 140.

8. Houston, op. cit., p. 88.